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ABSTRACT

Many of the educational changes during the last decade are international in respect to both form and content. Behind the global flow of ideas and ideologies, there is an accelerated competition for positions at the marketplace. The role of education in the new liberal rhetoric is explicitly to give direct and substantial economic results. Governments are not supposed to promote social justice, but to catch signals from the market and the consumers, and to introduce competition, choice and diversity into new fields. To examine these developments, a discussion of the concept of social justice in relation to the emergence of the welfare state is offered. The paper describes some of the education changes in Europe, particularly in Sweden, and presents statistics from the National Agency for Education. In Sweden, the welfare policy was introduced after World War II with a motivation close to Rawls' "distributive" definition of social justice. Equal opportunity is no longer a theme in the political rhetoric. The education for "excellency" threatens equity and equality as general educational goals and the number of marginalized pupils will increase. It is argued that a new conception of social justice is needed. (MKA)

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Social justice and welfare state in decline

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Abstract
Many of the educational changes during the last decade are international in respect both to form and content. Behind the global flow of ideas and ideologies, there is an accelerated competition for positions at the marketplace. The role of education in the new liberal rhetoric is explicitly to give direct and substantial economic results. Governments are not supposed to promote social justice, but to catch signals from the market and the consumers, and to introduce competition, "choice" and "diversity" into new fields.

In Sweden, the welfare policy was introduced after the II World War with a motivation close to Rawls' "distributive" definition of social justice. Equal opportunity is no longer a theme in the political rhetoric. The education for "excellency" threatens equity and equality as general educational goals, and in educational practice the number of marginalized pupils will increase. In the paper it is finally argued that a new conception of social justice is needed.

Introduction

In many countries the educational system has undergone significant changes during the last decade. In Britain, a written national curriculum has been introduced, as well as thorough changes in overall policy, administration, assessing and steering.[1] In Sweden, there is also a new curriculum for the compulsory school, since 1994, and there are new forms of governing, evaluation etc. In those countries, and in many other countries inside and outside Europe, we can see new relations between central state, local municipalities and individual schools. There are fundamental changes in the central steering of the schools from the national state on one hand and on the other hand a stronger local responsibility for school activity and economy.[2] We can also see diminishing public expenditures and new spaces for private or semi-private education in those countries where those school forms have been rare.

In those of the European countries, where a welfare policy was established during and after the 1950's, e g the Nordic countries[3], there has been a shift in general policy and rhetoric. Market relationships have been introduced as the norm at the expense of the old equality policy. New liberal slogans are used to describe educational realities. There is also a reinforced gap between various municipalities and between different groups of pupils - more segregation. Wealthy schools and less wealthy differ more than before, as do pupils from wealthy and less wealthy homes. Ethnic and gender relations change in this social transformation process, but in a complicated way.[4]

In this paper I will first give a background in a discussion of the concept social justice in relation to the emergence of the welfare state. After that I will describe some of the educational changes in Europe, most of all in Sweden. I will do it e g by presenting statistics from the National Agency for Education. I will complete this description with some global data and finally I return to the concept social justice for a concluding remark.

Social justice

In the three states which we discuss primarily in our session, Britain, Norway and Sweden, welfare policies have been prominent after the second world war. Particularly in Scandinavia, and most of all in Sweden, a system of social engineering was created,[5] where the central state apparatus administered a budget financed by high taxes to support various public activities and to make direct transfers to weaker groups in the population. Schools were central in the ideology of this part of the modern project. The idea of social justice was interpreted as the necessity of *school reform* in the Social Democratic ideology and rhetoric. School policy was seen as the *main* field where equality in society could be promoted.

In my opinion, there is a striking resemblance between Rawls' expressions (Rawls 1971) and those of the leading Social Democrats after the second world war. Rawls' two principles, and especially the second part of the second principle, that *"social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are (...) attached to positions and officies open to all"* (Rawls 1971 p 60) fits well e g into the post war programme of the labour movement (Arbetarrörelsens efterkrigsprogram, 1944). Rawls describes the prerequisites of social justice:

> *...."I assume also that there is fair (as opposed to formal) equality of opportunity. This means that in addition to maintaining the usual kinds of social overhead capital, the government tries to insure equal choices of education and culture for persons similarly endowed*

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[1] Rodhe, B & Nilsson, I (1988; 1990).

[2] See e g Whitty et al (1998) pp 15-30, where the authors examins the United States, Australia, New Zeeland, England/Wales and Sweden, and the following chapter, which discusses possible global tendencies.

[3] The ground for this policy was built in Sweden from 1932, when the Social Democrats incorporated the Keynesian economic theory and started to give unemployed persons work instead of state subsidies. In 1938 the important treaty of Saltsjobaden further founded the coming policy in the relations of the labour market. One way of describing the present shift in Sweden from traditional Social-Democratic policy to a policy influenced by new liberal reasoning, is to note the shift from Keynesian economic dominance to monetarian economic dominance ("la nouvelle economie"). Of course also political parties in the middle and to the right are interested in monetarian economic theories (de Vylder 1997 p 19).

[4] In her paper in this session, Berge (1998) notes disadvantages for girls and women in the process she calls "deregulation" (Berge 1998).

[5] The social engineering part of the post war policy has been discussed and criticized during some time.

and motivated either by subsidizing private schools or by establishing a public school system." (Rawls, 1971, p 275.)

In the post war programme the corresponding paragraph is: *"Equal opportunities of education for all youth, independent of the parents' income and place of residence."* (Arbetarrörelsens efterkrigsprogram 1944 p 18, my translation[6]). As we can see in this exemple, social justice was in the Social Democratic conception rather close to Rawls "distributive fairness".[7]

With reference to economy and geography, all pupils should have the same chance of school attendance. In reality, formal obstacles for studies at various levels were minimized. Schools should offer equal opportunities for all and be the lever of social progress. In Sweden, in contrast to the UK and many other countries in Europe, almost no private school sector existed parallel to the public school system.[8]

The result was supposed to be increased social mobility and an education appropriate to the individuals' capacity, independent of background in social class and geographic area - among decision-makers gender was not an actual problematic at this time. It became in fact possible - some time after the reform - to observe an expansion of the well educated middle-class. However, the main social origin of those exploiting an expansion in education was the layer already well educated.[9] That is to say, that those who had an higher education were the first to see the advantage of the new order and they used it for their own children.

Discontent

However, at least in Sweden, soon after the reform introduction of the nine year common, compulsory school *(grundskola)* in 1962, a certain discontent about the school policy was noticed among various groups in the population. First, one group of well-educated parents complained about "leveling", which meant too few ability groups and too little streaming. If all pupils had to attend the same school, it would have to be more differentiated, was their opinion.[10]

Another discontent was noted among some educational researchers and left intellectuals, who could not see that the far-reaching goals of school reform were obtained. Also after decades of reorganization, debate and change, it was a reality that the old (mainly social) selection mechanisms, e g measured as relative recruitment from different social strata to universities, were still the most solid facts in the educational system.[11]

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[6] For a longer perspective on the Swedish school history, I want to refer to Ulla Johansson's paper in this session (Johansson 1998).

[7] Rawls (1971 p 11) and Young (1990). I agree with Young (1990 p 15) that "distribution" is a rather reductionist perspective of "social justice".

[8] Due to the waste areas with a scarcely population in Sweden, and also to certain ideological positions (eg one mentioned by U Johansson (1998) - to take care of the gifted), the Social Democrats choose to create a public school system (of the two possibilities Rawls noted).
This has later been observed and commented upon by foreign researchers: "...Sweden, where non-state schools are so few as to be scarcely visible to the naked eye..." Neave, 1985 p 319.
"Private" schools (formally labeled "fristående", independent) have today almost always state economic support. As there were the lowest number of "private" schools (partly state financed) in the beginning of the 1980's, there were 35 schools at the compulsory level - in the autumn 1995 there were 238 (The National Agency for Education no 107 p 16).

[9] Gesser (1976) pp 23-74.

[10] As my colleague Gunmarie Johnsson has pointed out, this was a recurrent complaint in the school discourse during the whole 20th century.
It is interesting to note that the argument was exactly the same in the "Einheitsschule" in former eastern Germany: If the school is one, it must be highly differentiated: ..."von der Einheitlichkeit entsprechenden Differentierungen" (Nilsson (1987) pp 106-107).

[11] It is interesting to note that Gaby Weiner writes exactly the same about the UK in a paper from the ECER conference in Frankfurt: "...however, the early 1960s saw class barriers remaining intact at the level of higher education with the proportion of working-class children entering university actually decreasing"... (Weiner, G 1997 p 2).
There are some evidence that this process of widening social gaps at the university - and in the society - still goes on in Sweden today, but the reason is formulated in another way: As so many young persons are

The government had to balance between the two opinions mentioned here. On one hand, there had to be so much use of options and streaming, that high educated parents did not take their children out of the public school to give them private education. On the other hand, there could not be too many ability groups within the school - if so, the idea of comprehensivisation would be threatened.

The welfare state model as such was eventually questioned by an articulated layer of the population. New liberal tendencies reached the Nordic countries some years later than in Britain. After some time it was obvious, that the free individual at the economic market became the ideal, not the population in general or the collective. The state had no longer the only role to provide and distribute wealth, but to remove regulations, to catch signals from the market, to declare the nation's intention to participate in the global competition and to try to promote academic "excellency". The general ideology of equality which had been the guideline for the school policy was changed to an ideology of marketisation, competition and individualism. The new ideology was often expressed as a New Liberal rhetoric with key-words such as *choice and diversity* and *parental choice*.[12]

Comments on the background

After many years of welfare policy, with political party consensus in Swedish school policy and with an overall popular support for the mainstream interpretation of the reform direction, the policy was suddenly changed, without extensive debate. It looked as if the old welfare state policy was prejudged, and as if no one wanted to defend the old system. In Sweden, the first steps in a new direction, influenced by New Liberal reasoning, were taken in 1989 by the former Social Democratic government.[13] The goal was to increase parents' influence over choice of school.[14] The administration of the schools was transferred from the state to local municipalities. This is a very debated decision, as new (and segregating) differences can emerge between the local municipalities. The Ministry of Education, the Parliament and the National Agency for Education have after those decisions only limited right to intervene in the school policy of the local municipality. Within the local municipality one school can form one "result unit" and, e g, if the rent for the school building is high, little money is left for teacher salaries. On the whole, the rent for the buildings has increased by 16% during three years.[15] Private schools are allowed to start without detailed control - and many new have started.[16] Many regulations were removed from the local municipalities, e g there is no longer a fixed ratio of staff to children, regulations to limit the class' size do not exist any more, nor an obligation to use earmarked money for the schools. Instead, the local municipalities might spend the money in social security, administration or whatever they decide.

It is interesting to do a comparison between Norway and Sweden[17], where many of the backgound facts were almost identical, but where the economies separated from each other some years ago. In Sweden a recession motivated a firm social policy with reduced expenses for welfare, wheras the rich oil incomes of Norway not prevented the same social policy as in Sweden. In this case, it is possible to believe that the political directions of the both governments in those countries with different budget balance are influenced by the same reasoning of "the new economy".[18]

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unemployed, the state uses the university for keeping the young away from the labor market. Many students (otherwise unemployed) are low motivated and follow low status courses, and as a consequence, the quality will decrease in this part of the university education, and it will be more separated from the high quality (or high status) university education. (Dagens Nyheter, J Frykman, 15/9 1997).

[12] Kallós & Nilsson 1995 p 181. See also Gewirtz, S et al (1995 p 55) for conclusions about choice and social class.

[13] In her paper in this session, Weiner points out that the British New Labour also has a certain conservative element (Weiner, 1998).

[14] Proposition (Government bill) no 1990/91:18 and 115.

[15] Norlin, M (1997) p 55.

[16] In 1995/96 there were 238 approved and partly state-financed "private" (independent) schools at the compulsory level (10% more than the year before), with 17% more pupils than the year before. The National Agency, Report no 107 p 13.

[17] I want to thank Hildur Ve for numerous discussions in this issue.

[18] One difference between the countries might be a somewhat easier "educational" position for the Swedish

The lack of money in a local municipality in Sweden can become a problem, if the quality of schooling can be questioned. The pupil is legally forced to go to the compulsory school, also when the teaching is insufficient, bad or even missing. This is one of the political inconsistencies in the New Liberal school policy: the reasons which motivate competition between public and private alternatives presuppose rational choices on a free and rich market, where all individuals have equal power and knowledge. But in reality, the individual pupil is not guaranteed "freedom of choice on the market" - in most cases there is no genuine market. But there is a marketisation: a tendency to create market relations, where it is possible or profitable (demand enough).The *pupil* has no freedom, only some *parents* have. And: if the local school offers a low quality schooling, there is no freedom to leave - there is a compulsory attendance during the first nine school-years.[19] In a country like Sweden, most local municipalities do not offer a private alternative.

The new right for parents to choose another school than the one situated in the former catchment area is another threat to equality ambitions in school policy. The National Agency has investigated the outcome of the new parental right to chose between different public schools and between public and private schools. The result was reinforced segregation.[20]

At the same time as a political and ideological change in new liberal direction took place, an economic recession with unemployment and alleged less money for public spending occurred. I shall show in three ways how the new policy influenced the outcomes of schooling and the living of children.

Less special education[21]

The special education in Sweden has diminished a lot during the last years. During the year 1994/95 (one week was sampled) the special education diminished 3.3% compared to the year before.[22] During the year 1995/96 the special education diminished 11.9% compared to the year before.[23] At the same time, it is not possible to argue that the need is diminishing. The number of students who leave the compulsory school without grades is increasing.[24]

The number of hours one pupil get special education have decreased by almost 1/3 if we compare 1990 with 1994.[25] A study from the teachers' union shows that 20% of the schools do not have teachers in special education.[26]

In a report from the National Agency it is noted, that many local municipalities find that the proportion of pupils who have special education needs is increasing. Those local municipalities plan to start special groups or "therapy institutions" for pupils who are "acting out" (disturbing).[27]

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government: reductions can easier be motivated if there is a recession instead of surplus in the state finances.

[19] For a description of the present-day relation between public and private in Swedish schooling, see Nilsson (1997).

[20] The National Agency, press release 1996-08-29. http://www.skolverket.se 1997-09-04.

[21] As it is a general feature in Europe, that school autonomy or atomism is increasing, there is a new problem posed in the analysis of special education (Spalding, B et al (1996) p 268). The special education is more hidden today, if it exists.

[22] Reports from the National Agency for the Schools no 75 p 23.

[23] Reports from the National Agency for the Schools no 107 p 22. It is important to note that "Swedish as second language" (Swedish for immigrants' children) is diminishing at the same time.

[24] If the time schedule is individually adjusted or if absence is too high, the student gets no grade in one or more subjects. 5.8% of the students leaving comprehensive school were missing one or more grades in spring 1995. (Report no 107 p 24.) This fact has consequences for their further studies. Today there is a new grading system, but the problem is not solved, it is growing.

[25] Reports from the National Agency, no 100 p 69.

[26] The home page of "lärarförbundet", the teachers' union 23/3 1998 (http://www.lararforbundet.se).

[27] Reports from the National Agency no 100 p 58.

Less teachers in the school

The total number of teachers per 100 pupils were 8.3 during the year 1993/94, 8.1 during the year 1994/95 and 7.9 during the year 1995/96.[28] As this are general figures for the whole school system, there are different interpretations. But it is clear that the total number of teachers working in the school has diminished. The number of pupils has increased and the working hours for the teachers have decreased.[29] According to the data from The National Agency, the size of the classes has grown. The total cost for the school has diminished since 1991.[30] The cost for the *education* (not the total cost) of one pupil in the compulsory school has diminished by 17% between 1991 and 1994.[31] The total cost for one pupil in the compulsory school is very uneven over the country: in the sparsely populated areas the cost is doubled, compared to cost in the cheapest area.[32]

Less money in the families

Data from the National organization of Labor show that many families in Sweden have got less money to spend during the last decade. This is especially true for families with children and most of all for single parent (mainly single mother) families with children.[33] The consequence in this context is that many families have no chance to compensate for the lack of money in the schools. Families who are better off can afford to pay for their children's culture, sport etc.

Summary of the last years

We can calculate in different ways, but it is quite clear, that many children in Sweden have got less education, less time together with teachers, less money in the families and - if they need it - less special education during the last decade. Moreover, the distribution of wealth and poverty is not even. It is very uneven and the effects for the pupils are synergetic. Children from wealthy families tend to leave public schools for private schools, or poor public schools for richer public schools. Children often live in the same housing area as children from the same socio-economic stratum - catchment areas tend to be socially homogeneous, at least in the cities. The school or the school district has a standard comparable to the standard of the families living in the neighborhood. How the economic recession covariates with ethnic and gender inequalities - and combinations of ethnicity, gender and class - is to a great extent unknown.

There has been a change in the administration and legislation of the schools in many European countries. The local schools have got more responsibilities. In Sweden, power over decisions about schooling has partly been delegated from the centralistic state to the local municipalities. But the consequence is not that the centralistic state power has resigned, it has just changed. The state distributes money to the local municipalities and evaluates the results of schooling.[34]

Global perspectives

International/global studies are even more important than before. Many researchers consider that there is a new way of international (or global) reasoning in educational rhetoric and policy. Already in his book from 1990, Telhaug points out that in the "new" education there is a focus on the national culture, but also internationalization:

> *"But internationalization is not identical with the intense engagement for global perspectives of the 1970's, considering assistance to the developing nations."* [35]

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[28] Reports from the National Agency no 75 p 22 and 107 p 22.

[29] Op cit no 75 p 22.

[30] The National Agency, report no 100 p 67.

[31] Op cit p 70.

[32] One pupil in Kiruna (sparsely populated area in northern Sweden) costs 79.000 SEK (around 10.000 USD) a year; one pupil in Ljungby (southern Sweden) costs 38.000 SEK (around 5.000 USD). DN, 18/9 1997.

[33] DN 2/9 1997. If the families are separated into percentiles, the 10% most poor had lost more than 5% of the income at disposal every year - that is 33% during six years - while the most wealthy 10% had lost 0.3%.

[34] The National Agency, report no 100 p 74.

[35] Telhaug, A O (1990) pp 70-71.

Instead, it is a question of international competition - one reason why foreign language learning has increased in importance, he notes.

The most evident aspect of "globalisation" is the growing power of the financial markets, writes a Swedish economist.[36]

Ball writes in 1994:

> *"The market, as a policy alternative to 'public monopoly education', is clearly education policy flavor of the decade across the western world."*[37]

Today, in my opinion, it is also necessary to ask if there are parts of the world excluded from the "the western world" or the realities of the market economy. The richest 5% of the world population disposed 15% more of the GNP (85% of the total) and the poorest 5% lost 1% (to 1.4%), from 1960 to 1991.[38] In world economy, it is a fact that the marginalized part of the population is growing in two ways: in the poorest countries, and in the richest countries, the number of the most poor individuals will increase.[39] For education, this means that less children will get a good education.

Today, 17% of the population is living within the OECD, where 70% of the goods are produced. This figure is rapidly diminishing, creating enormous structural problems, unemployment and marginalisation within rich countries.[40] According to G Weiner[41], there has been a loss of jobs and employment among male British working class and lower middle class, and in Sweden, on the whole, no new jobs will be created, even if the economic conjuncture changes.

It is considered that about 1 100 million children exist on the planet, and that 100 million of them are living on the street. 200 million are working (most of them in a market economy) and this group is rapidly increasing in number. If we are interested in education, we can imagine that many children will never attend a school, and if they attend, they will soon leave.[42]

The girls in the world usually get less of schooling than the boys. There is a great variety between countries, but on the average, a girl gets 60% of a boy's time in school. In Afghanistan a girl gets 14% of a boy's time in school, in Algeria 18%.[43] In those (and many more) countries, the girls also later in life, as adults, are discriminated in legislation, economy and political life.

Also in Europe, many children are working, and the number is increasing. Many children get less of good schooling. The data and the tendencies I present in this paper are not isolated to Sweden (or the Nordic countries). I have given you some references which indicate, that I have described an international and maybe global phenomenon. In my opinion, there will be less public money spent on children in the future. Those parents in Europe, who can afford, will send their children to selected or selective public schools or to private schools. Most of the children in our countries will be left in public schools of lower quality, or left without sufficient education.

Return to social justice

One possible way out of the gloomy picture of education which I sketched is a return to "social justice" - but in another conception than the one I cited from Rawls (1971). Today, social justice must be global and engendered. Distribution must be connected to production and consumption, economy must be connected to ecology. The analyse can not just be about schooling, what is distributed and offered, more important is the real and varied experience of many children, education.

"Social justice" in education today primarily contains a questioning of further marketization, which we have seen contribute to widening gaps in the population. At the same time, the

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[36] de Vylder (1997) p 35.
[37] Ball, S (1994) p 102.
[38] de Vylder (1995) p 65.
[39] Op cit p 79.
[40] Dalin, P (1994) p 56.
[41] Lecture in Umea, Sweden 1997 09 18.
[42] In Guinea, the average pupil leaves school after 0.9 year (de Vylder, S. 1995 p 50).
[43] Op cit p 31.

"distributive fairness" in the old state regulated welfare policy has shown to be impossible, not at least in a global and gendered perspective.

What we need is a further analyse of the welfare state and of social justice. I also think that it will be possible, in some countries, to develop new local democratic solutions to old problems. However, in many countries, this might still be too early. In Sweden we are in the process of making the rise and fall of the welfare state comprehensible.

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